

The Stockport Partnership Handbook

A guide to the governance arrangements

March 2008



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Introduction

The Stockport Partnership was established in 2002 as the borough's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Since that time it has evolved significantly both in terms of responsibilities and structure. To meet the new agendas and responsibilities set out by central government and to reflect the local circumstances, it was felt appropriate that guidelines relating to governance issues were produced.

This Governance Handbook, which contains information to assist you as a member of the Stockport Partnership, draws on best practice guidelines. In addition, it draws on consultation and discussion with key stakeholders. It is intended to be helpful and practical as well as providing a sound foundation for future developments.

The Handbook and further information on Partnership meetings, strategies, plans and membership information are available on the Stockport Partnership web-site:

www.stockportpartnership.org.uk

Further information can be obtained on the Stockport Partnership by contacting:

Corporate Policy Team
Stockport Council
Town Hall
Stockport SK1 3XE

Email : communitystrategy@stockport.gov.uk

Purpose

The purpose of the Stockport Partnership is to bring people together from a range of voluntary, community, public and private sector organisations to work co-operatively with local communities and implement the long term vision for a better Stockport.

The Partnership aims to improve the quality of life for local people by actively promoting social, environmental and economic wellbeing, as well as identifying specific problems in order to design and target services at both the neighbourhood and borough levels.

The Partnership's primary objectives are to prepare and deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement. This is achieved through:

- Promoting a network of public and other agencies committed to the delivery of effective, efficient and high quality services that will provide optimum outcomes;
- The establishment of strategic objectives and operational plans, within the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, including commitment of core resources and agreement to continuous review of Partnership arrangements; and
- Promoting collaboration, particularly relating to skill sharing, training, resource management, external funding and best practice.

Structure

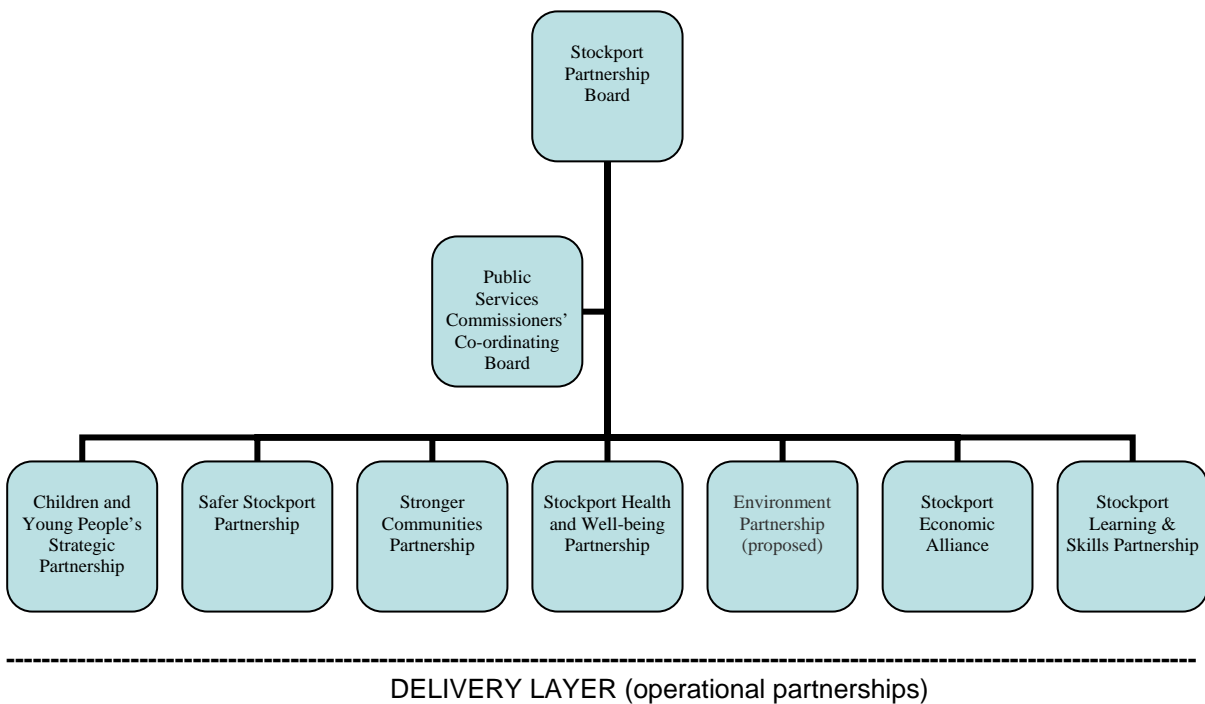
The Stockport Partnership is made up of the following;

The Stockport Partnership Board – this is the body that co-ordinates partnership working within the borough, providing direction to thematic partnerships, overseeing performance management and links with other bodies at national, regional and city-region levels. It also takes strategic and policy decisions on behalf of the Stockport Partnership.

Public Services Commissioners' Co-ordinating Board – this is a meeting of public service organisations working to oversee the effective delivery of Stockport's Local Area Agreement and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure.

Thematic Partnerships – these partnerships lead on key priorities around children and young people, community safety, voluntary and community activity, health and well-being, economy and skills.

Figure 1: The Stockport Partnership (at February 2008)



Constitution

This is the Constitution of the Stockport Partnership Board which was adopted at its meeting on 18th March 2008.

1. NAME

The name of the body shall be the Stockport Partnership (hereafter referred in this Constitution as “the Partnership”). The decision making body of the Partnership shall be the Partnership Board (hereafter referred in this Constitution as “the Board”).

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the Partnership is:

- To bring together the key public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations in Stockport (with a commitment to, and/or impact on, the future well being and development of the borough) to improve the quality of life for all who live, work, invest and spend their leisure time in Stockport.

The objectives of the Partnership shall be:

- To set the overall strategic vision for Stockport through the implementation, monitoring and review of the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.
- To enable local people and communities (through consulting, informing and advising) to identify gaps in service, needs and priorities which inform the strategic vision of the Partnership and actively shape the development of the agreed initiatives and projects.
- To promote an exchange of ideas, knowledge and information between communities, partners and sectors to develop learning and understanding of needs within Stockport.
- To deliver on common priorities, targets, agreed actions and milestones leading to demonstrable improvements against measurable baselines.
- To bring about the strategic alignment of plans, partnerships and initiatives across Stockport and which affect the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- To promote the interests of Stockport beyond the borough’s boundaries within external organisations, city regional and regional bodies as well as Central Government.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

The Board will reflect key sectors and interests in Stockport; balancing the interests of the Public, Private, Community and Voluntary Sectors. The membership of the Board will be as follows:

- Council Leader, Stockport Council (Chair)
- One place each for top-level executive or non-executive representatives from:
 - Stockport Council
 - Stockport Primary Care Trust
 - Greater Manchester Police (J Division)

- Stockport NHS Foundation Trust
- Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service

- One place each for:
 - Voluntary and community sector (nominated by MOVES)
 - Social housing sector (nominated by Stockport Housing Partnership)
 - Private sector (nominated by GM Chamber of Commerce)

- One place each for representatives nominated by each of the thematic partnerships:
 - Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership
 - Safer Stockport Partnership
 - Stronger Communities Partnership
 - Stockport Health and Well-being Partnership
 - Stockport Economic Alliance
 - Stockport Learning and Skills Partnership
 - Stockport Environment Partnership

In addition, GMPTE and Government Office for the North West will act in an advisory role on specific issues, but will not have voting rights.

4. PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD

Proceedings in relation to Codes of Conduct and Equalities and Diversity are explained within the Policies section of this Handbook. More specifically;

- The Board shall undertake an assessment, examining the appropriateness and balance of its membership, structure and processes a minimum of once in every three years. The next review of Board membership and structure will take place in March 2011.

- Any decision of the Board should be reached by consensus. Should consensus not be possible a vote may be requested. Should a vote be requested it should be resolved by a simple majority of those members present and voting at the Board meeting.

- Press and public will be permitted to attend Board meetings. Unless agreed otherwise by the Chair they will not be permitted to speak or participate in debate.

- The Board (and Thematic Partnerships) may from time to time invite representation from local agencies, where they have a *duty to co-operate* under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

- The membership of the Board is set out in Section Three of this Constitution.

- The Chair of the Board shall also be the Chair of the Partnership. This position will be held by the Leader of Stockport Council, until such time that

the Board decides to alter the arrangement in the manner set out in Section Six of this constitution.

- Elections and nominations to the Board will be carried out within one year of any recommendations being agreed as a result of the review process.
- Any member of the Board may resign by giving not less than one month's notice in writing to the Secretariat. In this instance the organisation or sector which they represent also resigns from the Board.
- If a member of the Board changes to a different employer, moves to a different geographical neighbourhood, loses his or her honorary position or paid post, their membership of the Board will automatically cease with immediate effect. The vacancy will be referred back to the appropriate selecting, electing or nominating sector to fill the vacancy as soon as is reasonably practicable, and the new member elected shall hold membership until the next review period.
- Should the Board consider the need to terminate the membership of a member for good and sufficient cause they may resolve, acting by a two-third majority of the members present and voting at a meeting of the Board, to expel that member from membership.
- Any vacancy arising from termination will be referred back to the appropriate selecting, electing or nominating body to fill the vacancy as soon as is reasonably practicable and the new member elected shall hold membership until the new review period.
- Board members must commit to (where practicably possible) 75% of attendance at all meetings in each calendar year.

If attendance from a particular sector or organisation falls below 75% in any one year and / or any member fails to attend for three consecutive meetings, then the Board has the powers to disqualify the said member, taking into consideration the circumstances regarding failure to attend.

If any member is so disqualified, the sector, organisation or partnership selecting, electing and nominating that member shall appoint a new member to the Board who shall hold membership until the new review period.

- In recognition of genuine attendance issues substitutes will be allowed to attend in a member's absence but must:
 - be a nominated substitute by each Board member i.e. at a deputy level of status in each organisation
 - always be the same person
 - be able to attend meetings when the Board member cannot
 - be fully briefed on all issues to enable full participation in meetings

- No business shall be transacted at a meeting of the Board unless a quorum of members is present. A quorum shall be one third of the members of the Board. If a quorum is not present within thirty minutes of the scheduled starting time of the meeting it shall be adjourned to such a date, time and place as may be determined. Notice of the date, time and place of the resumed meeting shall be sent to members as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- Where appropriate issues will be determined by a majority vote. In the light of a 'tie' the chair of the Board will have the casting vote.
- The Board may establish task and finish groups providing that all acts and proceedings of any such group shall be fully and promptly reported back to the Board. The composition, remit, powers and authority of any groups shall be determined by the Board at the meeting approving the establishment of the group followed by the group members developing a Terms of Reference to be ratified by the Board at subsequent meetings.

Secretariat

The Secretariat role for the Partnership and its Board will be provided by the Partnership Team funded through members of the Board. This work shall include co-ordinating agendas, commissioning appropriate reports, convening meetings, taking minutes and ensuring appropriate items and minutes are referred to the Board. This work is distributed across partners as appropriate:

- The activities of the Board will generally be administered by Democratic Services within Stockport Council.
- Stockport Council will ensure that Agendas and minutes are prepared for the Board. Agendas will be sent out at least one week before Board meetings. Copies of minutes to each member will be distributed within fourteen days of the date of the last meeting, or earlier, in the event of an emergency meeting being convened.
- Agendas will be agreed in advance by the chair of the Board in consultation with other members as appropriate.

5. FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

An annual calendar of meetings for the forthcoming calendar year shall be agreed in December each year and will include:

- Stockport Partnership Board – bi-monthly
- Thematic Partnerships – variable
- Public Services Commissioners' Co-ordinating Board – bi-monthly

The Board will also convene a Forum of key stakeholders at least twice a year. Additional meetings may be arranged as appropriate.

6. ALTERATIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Any proposals to alter the Constitution must be agreed by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting at a meeting of the Board. The notice of the meeting must set out the terms of the changes proposed.

7. DISSOLUTION

If the Board decides it is necessary or advisable to dissolve itself it may do so by calling a meeting of the Board for which twenty one days notice shall be given. The Board shall be dissolved if the proposal is confirmed by a two thirds majority of those present and voting at the meeting.

Dissolution may also occur if direction and / or guidance to this effect is given by the Department of Communities & Local Government.

All parties agree that any funding received by them for the purposes of projects to be carried out as part of the aims and objectives of the Partnership will be held on trust and used for the benefit of the project only and no other purpose whatsoever.

Terms of Reference

Roles and responsibilities

The role of the Stockport Partnership is:

- To co-ordinate partnership working within the borough, providing direction to thematic partnerships and links with other bodies at national, regional and city-region levels.
- To prepare and performance monitor Stockport's Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.
- To monitor the performance of the thematic partnerships.
- To improve partnership working on cross-cutting issues.
- To speak with a single voice for the borough and to provide a forum for a 'single conversation' with Government and joint lobbying.
- To convene at least two annual meetings of key stakeholder organisations for the purposes of communication and consultation, these meeting shall be known as Forums.

All members of the Stockport Partnership should aim to:

- Work proactively in the interests of better outcomes for Stockport residents and businesses;
- Provide leadership and be advocates for Stockport;
- Share information, data, consultation initiatives, best practice and resources wherever possible;
- Consult and engage with all parts of the wider community to evaluate the Partnership's work and continually assess its appropriateness to the community of Stockport;
- Prioritise work and only commit to those areas which can be delivered, making to and prepare for and attend meetings and follow up actions;
- Assist each other with key pieces of work in the interests of the profile, resourcing and operation of the Partnership, and better service provision in the borough;
- Work together towards the development of an integrated network of public and other services, focussing on outcomes, minimising bureaucracy and working towards the aligning of budgets for appropriate projects and areas of work;
- Develop an implement a Performance Management Framework for the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement. As a general principle it will monitor, evaluate and publicise its work;
- Promote clear and open decision-making; progressively integrated across different partners;
- Develop mutual trust and respect through a willingness to participate in constructive debate and provide strong support; and
- Promote innovation, be open to change and share good practice.

Policies

Code of Conduct

Most of the organisations involved in this partnership have their own code of conduct and this policy is not intended to replace those arrangements, but to complement them. This code of conduct is intended to guide the conduct of those working in partnership. It applies directly to those who are involved with the Stockport Partnership.

The Partnership Code of Conduct sets out some minimum standards of behaviour and general obligations. These are to guide the conduct of individual representatives on the Partnership whilst in meetings or carrying out activities on behalf of the Partnership. (Note the Partnership, as an unconstituted body will not be employing anyone directly, it is more likely that they will be employed under the auspices of one of the partners organisations and seconded to work with the partnership).

Standards of behaviour

Representatives must promote equality, abide by the Diversity and Equality Policy of the Stockport Partnership, and not do anything which may cause the Partnership to breach equality legislation.

All representatives must treat each other with respect and respect each other's views, letting people have their say without interruption and avoiding the use of offensive language.

Representatives must not conduct themselves in a manner that could reasonably be regarded as bringing the Partnership into disrepute.

Personal interests

Representatives must declare any personal interests in matters or decisions where it might reasonably be regarded that the following are affected to a greater extent than other residents of Stockport:

- their own wellbeing or financial position or that of a relative or friend
- any employment or business carried on by such persons
- any person who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors
- any organisation of which he or she is a member
- any organisation in which he or she or a relative is in a position of general control or management

Personal interests should be declared before the item is discussed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

A representative with a personal interest also has a prejudicial interest if the interest is one that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it would be likely to prejudice the representative's judgement of the public interest.

Prejudicial interests should be declared before the item is discussed and the representative should not participate in the discussion in order not to influence any decisions. The interest should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Gifts or hospitality

Any offers of gifts or hospitality should be treated with caution.

Any gifts or hospitality offered or accepted as a result of activity undertaken on behalf of the Partnership should be registered in accordance with any guidelines that exist within the organisation or body that the member is representing.

If gifts or hospitality are offered or accepted to an officer who is employed to support the Partnership, these should be registered in accordance with any guidelines that exist within the organisation by which the officer is employed.

Confidential Reporting Policy (Whistleblowing)

The Partnership is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment it expects representatives, and those who are employed under the name of the partnership who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Partnership's work to come forward and voice those concerns.

For the purposes of ease and clarity, the Council's Confidential Reporting Policy should be used. Copies can be obtained from the Partnership's administrator on telephone number 0161 474 3174.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct

If the Chair or the Secretary of the Partnership believes that a representative is in breach of the Code of Conduct, he or she will request the individual to withdraw from the meeting and a letter will be sent to the organisation or body that the individual is representing. The individual will be suspended from participating in meetings of the Partnership until the relevant organisation or body has investigated the matter, taken appropriate actions and informed the Chair of the Partnership in writing of those actions. A substitute may be appointed in the meantime.

Adoption of the Code of Conduct

Representatives of the Partnership should sign up to the Code of Conduct by formal adoption of the Code at a Partnership meeting.

Equality and Diversity

Vision and Objectives

The Partnership's overall Vision for equalities and diversity is that;

"We want to be recognised and known as an inclusive organisation that represents, serves and employs people as equals. We will also value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances."

In achieving this Vision the Partnership's objectives are;

- To champion equality of opportunity and to challenge all forms of discrimination in the borough. In this way the Partnership will contribute to Stockport being a place where people want to live, work and visit;
- To provide services that meet the individual needs of our customers and communities;
- To have a workforce that is representative of the communities we serve and to promote the benefits of having a diverse workforce;
- As a major purchaser and commissioner of services to use our spending power as partners to influence other organisations to promote equality of opportunity; and
- To further involve the public, our partners and employees in scrutinising these objectives, related targets and initiatives.

The Partnership specifically values diversity and equality issues in the Services it provides and through its employment policies. These values are set out in more detail below,

Services

The Partnership positively values the diversity of tradition, culture and belief within Stockport's communities. Partners should aim to provide and promote services to which all residents enjoy entitlement irrespective of race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, caring responsibilities, offending past, social class or age.

Partners will make sure that their services are delivered equitably and meet the diverse needs of the borough's residents and customers.

Employees

The Partners are committed to ensuring that they provide equal opportunities in employment to existing employees and anyone who applies for a job with them. This makes good business sense; it is in line with practice elsewhere and is a legal requirement to do so.

Partners expect their employees to commit themselves to challenging and combating discrimination in all its forms and will ensure guidance is developed to give effect to this principle.

A full version of the Partnership's adopted Diversity and Equality Policy can be accessed at:

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk/content/communitypeopleliving/equality/depdfs/divequalpolicy?a=5441>

Performance Management

The Partnership's performance management framework will be described in a separate document (to be completed).

Operational

Community Consultation and Engagement

The Stockport Partnership has produced the Stockport Charter for Public Participation and Involvement. The Partnership recognises that involving people and listening to what they have to say is one of the most important ways of improving local services. In addition, joint working on consultation and engagement has three key benefits, namely; saving in costs and resources, reduction of duplicated effort and 'consultation fatigue' and sharing expertise, skills and knowledge amongst partners.

The organisations belonging to the Partnership have agreed to use the following principles when consulting with and involving the people of Stockport. They will:

1. Listen to what people have to say
2. Be open and honest about what can be changed and what cannot
3. Behave with respect and courtesy to everyone who participates or is involved
4. Actively encourage public involvement in the planning and delivery of our services
5. Make sure that we recognise the diversity of the communities in Stockport
6. Make sure that all the necessary information is readily available in different formats as appropriate
7. Use a range of participation and involvement techniques to make it easier for people to become involved if they wish to
8. Give people feedback and keep them informed about the results of their participation

Full details of the Partnership's approach to consultation and engagement can be found at;

<http://s1.stockport.gov.uk/multiagency/home.html>

Scrutiny

All councillors have a role in community leadership. The overview and scrutiny of strategic partnerships is a vital way of ensuring councillors are engaged in this. The main roles of scrutiny at the LSP level are as follows:

- holding to account; creating openness and providing challenge and leadership.
- performance management; reviewing implementation, performance and resources.
- policy development; at the neighbourhood and borough wide level.
- policy review; of partnership work.

The minutes from Partnership meetings are all sent out to the appropriate Scrutiny Panels in Stockport Council. Members of Scrutiny Panels may request that the appropriate chair person attend a particular panel to answer specific questions.

Further guidance from Government is expected on the role of Scrutiny within the context of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act. The Act places a duty on partners to co-operate with scrutiny committees who can require information from them. Partners will also be required to consider any recommendations made by scrutiny committees and respond to the committee.

Partnership Working

The Partnership is committed to excellent standards in partnership working and to improving the way that we work across the whole family of partnerships in Stockport. The Partnership has developed a self-assessment toolkit that draws from existing good practice and points to a number of appropriate methods to help partnerships in Stockport assess their effectiveness and identify areas where they need to improve performance. The self-assessment element and action plan contained within the toolkit should form part of the Formal Reporting Agreement that each partnership has with the Partnership. The toolkit is predominantly aimed at the significant, formal strategic partnerships in Stockport but has relevance to all types of partnership.

A full copy of the self-assessment toolkit is available on the Partnership's website at http://193.112.136.165/pdf/PartnershipsToolkit_Aug06.pdf

Decision Making and Reporting Process

The links between the Partnership Board and Thematic Partnerships have been historically based on the strong local networks and relationships which already exist between the partners organisations. However, in the light of the new LAAs it is important that these links are strengthened, further formalised and made as transparent as possible. The Board will receive a further report on these issues for discussion and decision and the outcomes will be incorporated in this Handbook.

Appendix One

Role of Stockport Partnership Board members

Role Description

- To provide leadership to the Partnership and promote its work.
- To behave in an impartial and inclusive manner, ensuring business is conducted properly.
- To ensure that all groups are fully involved and encouraged to contribute to discussion and decisions at the Partnership, and that the principles of equal opportunities and valuing diversity are applied.
- To ensure that meetings are planned and run effectively, focus on the key issues and priorities of the Partnership and decisions are reached in an open and transparent manner and are guided by the Partnership's aims and objectives.
- To work with Council officers to plan Board meetings, secure commitment of partners to the Partnership and its work, and to help secure the resources required for the Partnership to function effectively.
- To represent and promote the Partnership at meetings, events and conferences and from time to time to make presentations on behalf of the Partnership as agreed.
- To act on matters that may be deemed "urgent" (i.e. when a delay may be to the detriment of the Partnership, an employee or other individuals/groups mandated to work with the Partnership).